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BREATH

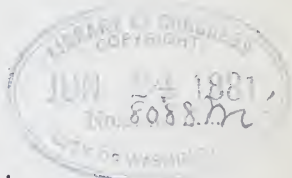
OF

THE FIELD AND SHORE.

BY

LOUISA PARSONS HOPKINS,

AUTHOR OF "MOTHERHOOD."



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P R E F A C E.

THIS volume, which makes but a very modest claim in the world of poetry, is put forth primarily at the request of many who have read or listened to its contents, especially a few of the longer poems recited on Alumni occasions at the Framingham State Normal School. The other verses are a fragment of the incidental indulgence of a life devoted to more pressing work, and were written only in obedience to that instinct for expression which indicates the mission of the poet, however limited in gift or development.

This mission I am not satisfied, as I look down the slope of life, to leave altogether unfulfilled or unrecorded, although its record falls far short of my early hope; but as the flower of the grass does not

refuse its measure of beauty and sweetness to the wayfarer, so I give these verses to the casual reader, hoping they may bear some perfume from the fields of Nature, and breathe in some degree its restful inspiration.

L. P. H.

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BREATH OF THE FIELD AND SHORE.



NONQUITT.

SUMMER has flashed her golden shuttle by

My dreaming eye ;

Its shining web of days so soft and fair,

Without a care,

Is folding down into the silent past,

Too bright to last.

Night unto night has told its peace serene,

While Luna, queen,

Paved her white, shimmering path above the deep,
 That stirred in sleep
 To lisp its dreamy bliss around the shore
 Forevermore.

Day unto day ushered its beauty in
 With happy din,
 Thrush and song-sparrow trilling through the hours,
 While myriad flowers
 Bespangled dewy grass and fragrant wood,
 And all was good.

The odorous breeze wafted its music round,—
 A varied sound.
 Called from the wide campaign the whistling quail,
 The tern's shrill wail

Answered afar, and boomed from rock to rock
The billows' shock.

Here have I sat without my cottage-door
And watched the shore,
Followed its curving line to where the town
Lies sloping down,
Its clustering gems in simple beauty set, —
Fair coronet !

And still along its amber thread of strand
Stretches the land,
Till the grim fortress at the harbor's mouth
Looks threatening, south,
But hears no sound save dash of spray that wet
Its parapet.

Then on and on the rippling waters spread

By cliff and head,

By long, low neck, and sunny-sanded isles,

The blue bay smiles,

Till, like a soul within the conscious seas,

Sits Penekese.

And to and fro the opal sails have sped,

Or glimmered red

The seven coast-lights about the landlocked bay,

While night and day

The broad blue sky with sun or star has lit

Light-bathed Nonquitt.

But now the slopes are shadowing with wings,

And southward swings

The clamoring host of swallows o'er the sea ;

'Tis time for me

To seek my closer eaves, and, sighing, fold

This cloth of gold.

TEMPESTUOUS DEEPS.

PASSIONATE, stormy ocean,
Spreading thine arms to me,
The depths of my soul's emotion
Surge with the surging sea :
Waves and billows go o'er me,
Give me thy strong right hand !
The throes of my heart's vain struggle
I know thou wilt understand.

Break with thy hidden anguish,
Restless and yearning main !
Echo my sighs ; I languish,
Moaning in secret pain.

The heart I had trusted fails me,

The hopes I would rest in flee ;

Woe upon woe assails me,

Comfort me, answering sea !

Mightily tossed with tempest,

Lashed into serried crest,

Roaring and seething billows

Give thee nor peace nor rest :

O, to thy heaving bosom

Take me, wild sobbing sea !

For the whole earth's groaning and travail

Utters itself in thee.

THE CORUSCATING SEA.

I LEFT my cares behind me,
I left them all with glee,
When flashed beyond the cedars
The coruscating sea.

Beyond the sombre cedars,
Beneath an azure sky,
The white caps dash and sparkle,
The white gulls dip and fly.

The snowy spray is wafted
Like pennons on the breeze,
The glowing rocks begemming
The blue and bossy seas.

My cares I leave behind me,
My glad heart springs to song,
With blithe steps bounding lightly
I dance the sands along.

I greet the joyous ocean !
I greet the ecstatic day !—
The day when by the billows
I flung my care away.

THE TENDER LOVE OF GOD.

HAMPTON BEACH.

In every line of breaking beauty seen,
In every foamy crest or concave green,
O'er blue expanse, where sky and ocean meet,
The tender love of God is brooding sweet.

Written in wavy tracery on the sand,
Spoke by the echoing rocks' encircling band,
Breathed in the pure and healing winds that fly,
The tender love of God is hovering nigh.

Painted on every fair and pearly cloud,
Sung by the sea's grand monotone aloud,

Whispered within each convoluted shell,
The tender love of God so close doth dwell.

In quickened pulse by his own finger stirred,
In grateful heart responsive to his word,
In burning soul that worships at his feet,
The tender love of God abides most sweet.

THE SECRET OF THE NIGHT.

THE night is full of meaning ; whispers run
From either firmament ; the mystic sea
Responds along her borders audibly ;
The sibyl moon her vigil has begun,
And thrills the wave with weird illumining.
Full well she knows the secret of the air,
Forbidding all the billows to declare
Its deep intent, and when they, longing, spring
For sympathy to the confiding shore,
She strikes them with her wand, and naught is heard
But broken sobs and vague, unuttered word,
Mocking the yearning heart forevermore.

But round the sea's gray arc, o'er yon dark rim
The message is borne onward; in the deeps
Its purpose understood; the wonder creeps
Silent along the path where moonbeams swim,
Then 'cross the reach of outer shade it rolls
To leave its burden at magnetic poles.

THE HEREAFTER.

O WIDE blue arc of sea,
What wondrous mystery
Flees over thy thin edge?
To it my faith I pledge !
I know not how nor when
Its measure I shall ken,
What secret waits revealing,
What treasure Death 's unsealing ;
But that horizon's rim
Shall not be always dim ;
Sometime my heavenly eyes
Shall look without surprise

Beyond its mystic verge,
And Paradise emerge,
With its fair, beckoning shore,
Safe from the tempest-roar.
Then all shall be made known,
And what is dark be shown, —
All longing satisfied ;
And ways that we have tried,
Tempt and delude no more,
On that far, unseen shore.

THE SALT-MARSHES.

THERE 's a wondrous wide level of beauty, the Oldtown
salt-marshes, —

Hemisphere of lush green with its conical islands of
russet,

Perch of the windy snipe or throne of the eagle,
Graced by the gulls ; their summits diverging, retreating,
Dwindle to dots of gold where they fleck the horizon.

The green, green intervals stretching so fresh and so
quiet,

Wet with the lapsing tide and meandering river,
Spread in alluring repose, now concealed, now dis-
covered, —

Limitless peace, earth's response to the blessing of
heaven ;

Reaching afar they decoy the thought beyond vision,
Luring the fancy to fly as birds hither and thither,
Circling and winding to follow the wandering river,
Hieing to cover and shadow, then forth to the sunlit
Infinite opening, to take the wings of the morning
And speed to the uttermost sea beckoning there with
white fingers.

There 's a way that the foot can tread over rocks gray
and mossy,

Through woods of the balmy pine and vine-netted
bushes ;

There have I walked with another ; our young hearts,
expanding,

Grew with the growing beauty, and were not astonished.
Discerning the secrets which Nature reserves for her
 children,

We saw, as the poet, clouds floating beneath the dark
 pine-trees, —

Tenderest cloudlings tethered like flocks to their
 bushes, —

Impalpable mist of color from shrubs newly bud-
 ding, —

Amber the willows, rosy the oaks and the maples.

To us they appeared the pillar of cloud of God's
 presence,

Mystical symbol, the cloud of expressed resurrection.

There have we walked through glory of crimsoning
 sumach,

Purple of elders, the prodigal hues of the maples,

Radiant golden-rod, dazzle of starry aster,
To the dull marsh-gold shot through with the blue
threading river.

But O the way of the tide ! with white wings to follow
The wake of the gulls among the dissolving islets,
To drift with the tortuous current through emerald waters,
To cruise into crystal shallows with shifting rudder,
Glide into the dream within dream, the maze of the
meadows ;

The gracious skies deepening above us and breathing
around us,

Our hearts throb with joy, with the fulness of life all
our pulses ;

To the close brooding Spirit our souls, palpitating re-
sponsive,

Plume their wings and soar away to the Source and
the Fountain.

Our ghosted souls aswing from the body's moorings,

Mated and plumed and poised in infinite spaces,

Rising on buoyant wings of divine aspiration,

Are one with the heart of Nature, the worship of earth
and of heaven.

EASTER SONGS.

THE song of the sap
From its mother's lap
Springing to welcome the Easter Day !
The song of the wood
That groweth good
With the sap that riseth and will not stay.

Clear harmonies
Of the fluted trees,
The organ-pipes of the bird and bee,
The voice that wells
From the leaflet-cells, —
A hidden murmur of melody !

The opening sheath
Of the willow's wreath ;
Chorus of birds, high carolling ;
The cymballed psalm
Of the air's soft palm
Closing after the cleaving wing ;

The patter of showers,
The waving flowers,
The symphony of the south-wind free ;
The vibrant harp
Of the ice-clad scarp,
Struck to the chord of the sounding sea ;

The whirl of wings,
The bubbling springs,
The bursting ice and the melting snow ;

The rapid's roar
And the rippling shore,
The unchained brooks and the rivers' flow ;

The nestling broods,
The interludes
Of chirp and trill, of coo and call, —
The loosening hold
Of the leaf-bud's fold,
And the resurrection of each and all !

Let the pæan rise
In the eastern skies,
While planets sing on their mystic ways ;
With heart and voice
Earth and heaven rejoice,
And the song of life be a song of praise !

THE WORLD'S LULLABY.

BEHOLD the soft-swathed earth

Cradled in balmy air,

Since its glad hour of birth

Rocked like a child most fair ;

Girdled with downy bands,

Clothed in the beauteous lands,

In swaddling seas at rest

Like sleeping babe upon its mother's breast !

In tender ether wrapped,

It swingeth to and fro,

While in bright outline mapped

The swift, fresh breezes blow ;

And round it strong winged birds,
Or singers of sweet words,
Through gales of perfume fly,
Chanting unceasing songs of lullaby.

Fairly arrayed it lies, —

Peak upon peak of snow
Piercing the outer skies, —

The pearly seas below ;
Green plains in beauty spread,
'Broidered with silver thread ;
The river-feeding rills
Glancing among the velvet-verdured hills !

The silver-hornéd moon

Leans o'er the babe asleep ;

The burning sun of noon

Stretches its torrid sweep ;

The belting zodiac

Spreads wide its starry track ;

Ranks of celestial guard

Through the close clustering worlds keep watch
and ward.

Float on, calm babe asleep,

In hollow of God's hand !

He holds the oceans deep,

He weighs the mighty land ;

Inspired by his breath,

Life shall be thine, not death ;

So down thy cycles swing,

To grow unto the stature of a king.

EPIGÆA.

Out of the woods' dim sepulchre,
Fresh from the shrouding leaves,
Bloom the flowers for Easter-morning,
And my heart their pledge receives,
Of the Lord of the Resurrection,
Who death and loss retrieves.

Sweet to my sense their presence,
Lovely their soft, pink flush !
As the day-spring lights the heavens
In the Easter-morning's hush,
So the message of life perfumes them
And kindles their tender blush.

“See ! Life from death awaketh !”

The mould-sprung blossoms say ;

“Angels from sealèd sepulchre

Have rolled the stone away ;

Christ is risen, and through the shadow

Streams the eternal day !”

SANGUINARIA.

SOUL-FLOWER, so pure and white, —

A star of chrysolite !

Thy central flecks of gold

Such dainty care do hold

Not to emboss the petals chaste and fair,

Nor drop one wanton mote of pollen there !

The sheltered, modest stem

Kissing thy blossom's hem,

Swaying with slender grace,

Wrapped in the leaf's embrace,

The brown-ribbed leaf, hued like the olive-tree,

Conserving all the dews of heaven for thee ; —

Christ's love — thy bleeding root

The symbol well may suit !

From it the soul shall spring,

Dressed in white blossoming,

While round her growth the sheltering church doth fold,

And o'er her bloom droops Heaven's crown of gold.

APPLE-BLOSSOMS.

STORM-TWISTED, gnarléd bough,

Bloom forth in beauty now,

Spring breezes woo thee !

Hush the wind's blustering,

Wear thy fresh clustering

Blossoms, close mustering,

Hastening to thee !

Leaf, bud, corolla fair,

Spread in ambrosial air,

Bossy branch cover ;

In pink and white array,
Decked for thy bridal day,
Reaching forth graciously,
Welcome thy lover !

MORNING-GLORIES.

DELICATE vases of fairest hue,
Daintily set for the early dew,
That the dying stars their grace may view ;

Pink of the conch-shell, blue of the sea,
Tyrian purple with pearl flecked free,
Tint their Etruscan symmetry.

Hebe might covet the sheeny cup
On its heart-shaped salver offered up,
Where the queenly mornings their nectar sup.

O, prodigal beauty for opening eyes !

The tendrilled vine with its grand surprise

Of bloom upturned to the dawn-flushed skies !

EASTER LILIES.

THE pure and holy lilies
Attend their Lord alway ;
The Easter-lilies praise him,
They “ of the valley ” pray.

Red-lilies speak his passion,
Field-lilies breathe his love,
And Water-lilies image
His peace in heaven above.

Weave in the glorious blossoms
To deck the Easter tide,

An offering fit and spotless,

By Jesus sanctified !

And when in bliss we see him, —

The gates of life thrown wide, —

The Angel of the Lily

Shall lead us to his side.

THE LILY OF THE VALLEY.

IN its mossy bed,

See ! the lily's head

Is drooping low in its sweet, sad grief ;

So my soul is bowed

With a love I vowed

To a heart dead to me as the withered leaf.

The lily is white

From the sorrow-spent night,

Though it felt the soft breath of the south-wind warm ;

So I wake more pale

When the night's dim veil

Is snatched from my dreams of a vanished form.

But the lily fair
Sheds its sweetness rare
Through the grateful valley, o'er its mossy bed ;
While this tearful vale
Of the life I bewail
Is sadder yet for my bowèd head.

O fragrant flower !
I will bless the hour
Which thy modest life has perfumed for me ;
And the valley I tread
Shall have sweetness shed
O'er its lonely path when I think of thee.

NASTURTIIUMS.

BRIGHT flowers, still loyal to the summer's heart, —

Flag of her blazonry on death-strewn field, —

Hold high aloft your banners, act your part,

And, like the patriot-martyr, never yield,

But clasp, undaunted, your firm radiate shield ;

Sword from your golden scabbard proudly wield !

I know ye, glorious flowers incarnadine !

Your twining stems have grappled round my life ;

For o'er twin patriot graves your blossoms lean,

And on white stones are cut with sculptor's knife, —

Symbol of blood shed in a country's strife, —

With sacred love and holy memories rife !

I breathe your pungent perfume wafted near,
Your aromatic fragrance I inspire ;
Type of how costly sacrifice ! the tear
Of deep affection springs ; my strong desire
Calls back those fresh, young faces, souls of fire, —
My brothers ! — offered on fair Freedom's pyre.

Bloom till ye fall like heroes at the front ;
With gold and crimson colors lead the fight ;
How well your green escutcheon bears the brunt !
Your flaming rays still challenge winter's night,
Guerdon that brave souls shall not suffer blight,
But " precious shall their blood be in his sight " !

BARBERRIES.

To the sunny autumn fields

Let us stray,

In the glory of an Indian-summer day ;

Through the singing, grass-hid broods,

To the sedgy quiet woods,

From the busy city's hum far away !

In the myriad leafless stems

We may see

Blazing banners of the fruit on bush and tree ;

Barberry sprays like pendent gems,

Where their ruby diadems

Crown with triumph Nature's bright euthanasy !

Each fair drop translucent gleams

In the light,

Iridescent, coruscating like a sprite ;

All in gay prismatic beams,

Till its burning shimmer seems

The last flush of summer's soul before its flight.

IN THE FERNERY.

Wondering, I sit and see
Types of clear symmetry,
Model of leaf and tree,
Grow in my fernery.

Delicate tracery
Outlined so fine and free,
Pencilled and etched for me,
Gracefully, airily.

Rising like verdurous dream,
Emerald spires they seem,

Piercing light's golden beam, —

Minaret's crescent gleam !

Gossamer web of green,

Fine ebon curves between,

Feathers of grace that lean,

Plumes for Palmyra's queen.

Exquisite fronds entwine

Beauty's acanthus line

Chiselled in serpentine,

Nature's own seal and sign.

Shaft and volute and scroll,

Stem and leaf-bud enroll,

Archetypes finished, whole,

Fair as fair sculpture's soul.

Each line a groove of thought
Where divine skill has wrought,
Marvels of beauty brought
From Empyrean court.

How complete ! how refined
Nature's casts ! form and mind
In their true parts combined,
Clearly by God outlined.

No hasty work is done,
Perfect the mould is run,
Nicely the web is spun,
Surely the victory won.

“TELL THEM, DAISIES.”

TELL them, daisies, tell them sweetly

All I fain would say ;

Let your white stars say it meetly

Through the soft fern-spray.

With a love-look, full, complete,

Speak it, pure-lipped Marguerite ;

In a heart-throb, perfume-set,

Breathe it, mignonette !

COMPENSATION.

Does the snow gently fall?

How quick the sunlight sparkles through the air,

. And gladly over all

The smile of heaven plays beautiful and fair.

Does the rain come in showers?

Listen ! for soon the thankful earth will sing,

And through the happy flowers

Will run the thrill of the bird's dripping wing.

Fades the rich crimson west

Into night's stillness? See how close and bright

The heavens with stars are drest,

And day transfigured in celestial night !

TEACHERS OF OLD.

So far away
That dim, historic time,
When in their mighty prime
Egypt, Chaldea, Assyria's kingdoms lay
Colossal and sublime,
Wielding majestic sway
Over the fertile valley of the Nile,
Beneath the shadow of the sculptured pile,
Or where the Tigris and Euphrates stray
Over their marshy beds whose shores beguile
The wayward currents through their reeds to play,
Those century-sounding chords which sing their glorious
day.

Yet clear, through ages dim,
Sounds the inspiring hymn, —
Call of the teachers of man.
From generations far
They have marshalled the holy war,
They have marched in the van,
Crying, "Forward ! shout reveillé !
Lead on from night to day,
From the false to the true,
From the chrysalis of the old to the wingèd hope of
the new !"

See, in the far-off ages,
From Ur of the Chaldees,
Rideth a white-robed Sheik,
Spear poised and quick to strike

For the one God whose call
He followed, not knowing at all
 Whither he went ;
 With folded tent,
The slow-paced caravan
In the shadow of this man
Stretched over the star-lit plain,
Winding to narrow main,
To the Nile's grain-fringed coasts,
Obeying the God of Hosts
By his servant Abraham,—
The world's bright oriflamme !
The eternal letters of the skies
Were clear to this man's eyes,
Lesson that faith could understand,
Watching the pointing of God's hand.

With the spirit to learn that made him grand,
Made him a teacher and a seer.

So through all history doth appear

He who can listen and learn so well

That he needs must tell

What God tells him, and accept his mission

Obedient unto the heavenly vision ;—

The called of God to go

Before the hosts and show

The way to the Promised Land,

To repeat the divine command

From division to division.

So listened Moses to the call,

Feasting in Rameses' hall,

Leaving the sweets of earthly bliss

And the glory of Heliopolis, —
Leaving forever his princely youth
To seek the pure, eternal truth.
Listening again and again
From the tower of flocks on Midian's plain,
Till the burning bush, in tongue of flame,
Pronounced the all-inspiring name ;
A commission to him who heard
To interpret that radiant word
To the nations enslaved, who wait,
Crushed and disconsolate,
Amid oppressor's rule,
For the leader and teacher to guide them
Into the desert school.
With primer of wonders and sign,
With precept and line upon line,

And the lesson on tables of stone
That God was God alone, —
They learned from mountain-pages
The mighty truths of the ages ;
And the face of Moses shone
With a glory not his own,
Till the holy task was done, —
Great teacher and leader in one.

IN THE BEGINNING.

WHAT force in creation's dower
To lay its foundations, whether
Bastions of logic tower
Bolting its walls together,
Or bands of colossal power
Are stretched for a planet's tether !
Atom to atom clinging,
Planet to planet swinging,
Outer darkness alluring,
Suns centripetal pouring
Light through elastic ether,
Firmament upper and nether !

Magnetic poles are burning,
Electric wheels are turning,
Spinning adamant cables
Stranger than myths or fables ;
Swifter than weaver's shuttle
Crossing the threads so subtle,
Meshing the infinite spaces
With fine, intangible traces, —
Ah ! what strength and skill
Fashions the worlds at will.
Gases seething and tossing,
Condensing, burning, embossing
Heaven with its globes of fire
To shine, decay, expire !

With many lightnings and thunders
Evolving God's plan of wonders ;

With unseen and unheard forces
The stars are set in their courses ;
The world swings true to her motions,
With balanced lands and oceans.
She had shot off a lamp for her night
With phases of silver light ;
The palpitating air
Softened her outline fair ;
To everything that lives
Some share of thought she gives ;
But man, earth's parasite,
Is Nature's high delight.

He, creature of an hour,
Beggars all else in power.
Behold him king ! invested
With might from all things wrested :

All forces he shall tame,
And call the stars by name.
To him she will delegate
The right of her high estate, —
Her dear prerogative,
To him she deigns to give ;
Of choosing a life to live, —
Of infinite, far progression,
In endless resurrection.

THE BUILDING OF THE TABERNACLE.

WORD came to the people of God in the great congregation,

“Take from among you an offering, bring an oblation ;

Offering of silver and gold, of purple and spices,

Stones to be set, and onyx for holy devices,

Skins of the chamois and ibex, and brass for the laver,

Shittim-wood dyed, and acacia-wood for the carver ;

Whosoever is willing, the rich or the lowly,

Let him bring forth out of his treasure for service most
holy.”

So they came, — every man with a heart of wisdom
within him

Brought silver and brass and gold, fine purple and linen ;
With bracelets and amulets came all the women wise-
hearted,

Or spun the red wool and silk from the cocoon parted.
For the work of the tabernacle and service of altar
Their hearts did not fail them in giving, their hands
did not falter.

More than enough for the service they brought unto
Moses,

Till he answered, "Restrain ye ; sufficient the tent-cloth
encloses."

Then Miriam spoke for the women, her brow all aflame
With the passion that burst from her soul, and tumultuous came

To her lips silver-portal, in speech like a quivering fire,
Up-surgng and soaring in voice of celestial desire :

“Thou hast called us, my brother, to bring as a gift
for the Lord

Our choicest and rarest of treasures, most precious of
hoard ;

All the jewels we brought from the Nile-land, the
bracelets we wore

In the court of the Pharaohs’ daughters, our garments
of yore,

Precious heirlooms embroidered with emeralds and
heavy with gems,

Our circlets of set scarabæi and chased diadems,

Our beautiful linen enwrought with the blue lotus-flower,

Our pearl-woven tassels and fringes, the silks of our
dower,

Graven signets of sapphire and amethyst, necklace of
gold,

Our exquisite girdles of wreathen-work, fair to behold,
Pure olive-oil beaten for burning, and silver lamps hung
With fillets of bells chiming sweetly, and jasper urns swung
From curious settings of agate, thin vases perfumed
With Egypt's rare odors, with topaz and diamonds
illumed ;
Quaint symbols and mysteries of lily-work, sculptured
and done
By the chiefest of Rameses' sculptors, the glory of On ;
Chaste, delicate patterns of beauty in ivory made,
Tall feathers of red-sheathed papyrus, the grain's golden
braid,
Nile-lily and lupine and flax-flower and fleece of the
trees,
Stork, pelican, ibis, their plumage up-tossed by the
breeze,

All loveliness run in the fine glass, shot through in
bright hues

Gold threads and lace meshes of silver; rare art to
infuse !

The frescos of Karnak's grand temple, the spirals that
twine

Round the pillars of white alabaster encircling the shrine,
Long colonnades wondrously fretted, feast-dishes that
graced

The table where thou, my beloved, in honor wert placed ;
Rare dishes of porcelain colored and basins of bronze,
Long towels of fine twined linen for Rameses' sons.

Priceless gems from the land of our bondage, we count
them as dust

For the dwelling of Him whom we worship, whom un-
seen we trust.

Out of these, O my son's son, Bezaleel, of God-given
skill,

Build the ark with its mercy-seat holy that Shiloh shall fill !

Mould cherubim hovering over, branched candles of gold,

High altar and holy of holies with hangings enfold ;

Raise pillars with chapiters glorious and doors of the
shrine,

Cloths of service and ephod and breastplate and girdle
divine,

Golden bells for the hem of the priest-robe, the mitre
and plate,

Plate of clear gold with "Holiness" graven for Aaron's
high state.

Forget not the skill of the graver on blue-chiselled steel,

Nor the fashion of moulding and carving thou may'st
not reveal,

And the gods of the Nile thou shalt ravish of cunning
and lore

For the house of Jehovah-Redeemer, — the God we
adore.

Now to him do we bring all our offerings in gladness
of soul,

And we send up our song like an incense above them
to roll ;

With the music and dance will we praise him, and offer
our gift —

For he our transgressions will pardon, our weakness
uplift —

To the God of our Fathers enthroned on the clear
sapphire height

Where Moses with shining face saw him pass by in his
might ;

Up the grand sacred terraces climbing, soar high, O my
song !

All winged with a passion of worship, and wafted along
O'er the ladder celestial of Jacob, where angels ascend

And the seraphim chant him their pæans, yea, world
without end !

We praise thee, O Elohim,

Throned in the cloud !

Swift lightnings express thee,

And thunderings loud ;

Sweep, burst like a whirlwind

From height unto height,

Grand chorus of trumpets

Proclaiming his might !

Unclothed are the mountains,

And naked and hoar

The ancient rocks tremble

Thy presence before.

In thick clouds and darkness

Thy majesty hide,

For the day of thy coming,

Ah, who may abide !

O'er foot-scorching deserts

Thy sun-arrows smite,

Devouring fire,

Thy glory and light !

Till in great rock-shadows

The heat fades away,

And the cool rest of eventide

Endeth the day.

With shimmering lances
O'er yon deepening sky
Night's serried host glances
From camp-fields on high.
Their star-banner riven
Floats white o'er the plain,
And the music of heaven
Re-echoes our strain.

Hark ! hark ! from the rock-cleft
We hear thee proclaim,
“ Long-suffering, merciful ! ”
Gracious, new name !
O, gentle hand-cover !
O, soft touch of love !
O, heart like a mother,
Our weakness above !

Why feared we thy thunder,
Why shrunk from thy light,
Cloud-pillar before us,
Flame-banner by night?
Like Nubian lions
The foam-billows reared,
Curbed back from the path
Where thy glory appeared.

Thy flock like a shepherd
Thou 'st tenderly led,
In thirsty land nourished,
In barren land fed.
No longer thy glory
Our spirits appall,
But patience and tenderness
Covereth all.

Touch gently, O maidens,
The timbrel and lute !
Sing softly, sweet singers,
Harsh cymbals, be mute !
But let the harp's yearning
Breathe out on the air
The sweetness of worship,
The nearness of prayer !

Toss high, O ye palm-trees,
Your emerald plumes !
Bright tamarisk blossoms,
Waft wide your perfumes !
Wave, purple acacia,
Your tassels abroad,
And offer sweet incense
To Israel's Lord !

Ye zones of winds rushing,

Ye streams of the sea,

Ye desert-wells gushing

Perennial and free,

Ye fountains of waters

And gathering rain, —

Join all your glad voices

To swell the refrain !

Ye grand rock-hewn temples,

Shafts piercing the skies,

Ye stairways of angels

From Sinai that rise ;

Ye great congregation,

Redeemed by his rod, —

Awake the grand anthem

To Israel's God !

PSHANSHAW.

AN INDIAN IDYL.

I.

THE MORNING PRAYER.

AMID the prairies of the wild Missouri
Stretches the village of the Ricarees ;
Bright flowers and grasses, beautiful pot-pourri,
Wave gayly in the early morning breeze.

The distant line of blue hills undulating
Frames the fair picture like enamelled ring ;
Bright-plumaged birds through rosy airs gyrating
Above the flowery billows soar and sing.

Swiftly from out the picket's tall enclosure

Runs little Pshanshaw, the Sweet-scented-grass ;

Above her swings the amber-budding osier,

The drooping boughs bend low for her to pass.

Her flashing, jetty tresses loosely streaming

O'er trailing robe of young white buffalo,

Her shining necklace of the elk-teeth gleaming,

Her beaded moccasins that come and go ;

Her pretty slip embroidered with fair seeming

Of blossom and of berry, fawn and doe, —

All her glad vestal garments brightly beaming,

A shaft of light upon the morning's glow ;—

A radiant form upon the waving prairie,

Speeding toward the sunrise, sweet Pshanshaw !

Hastening to greet day's glorious luminary,

And worship at his feet in grateful awe.

The fragrance of a wilderness of flowers,

Sweet-scented grasses, purple clustering fruit,

Are incense in that temple mid whose bowers

Kneels little Pshanshaw with glad wonder mute.

Then o'er the blue hills and the rushing river

Bursts the new glory of the rising sun ;

His clear light-arrows round her shine and quiver,

And greet her with warm kisses,—happy one !

So home she speeds, blest with this morning praying,

While all the songful voices of the air,

And wandering breezes through her tresses straying,

Sing to her heart in ceaseless praise and prayer.

II.

THE BATH.

THE level shafts of light spread o'er the prairies,
Great sunflowers turn to flash their high salute,
Wild roses blush, and delicate dawn-fairies
Breathe the fresh scent from myriad flowers and fruit.

The blue-leafed boughs of buffalo-bush hang heavy,
Their scarlet berries dewy with the prime ;
The butterflies in many a dancing bevy
Greet the tall crimson lilies in the thyme.

Over the wide-expanded verdurous ocean
Race the fleet deer, or crops the tender doe,

While o'er the distant hills in wild commotion

Plunge the grand, shaggy herds of buffalo.

Into the sunrise whirls the glancing river,

And glitter all the jewels of the strand;

Agate and jasper, prisms all a-shiver

With sparkling light on water and on land.

Upon the cliffs, whose castellated border

Shelters the beach, stand wary sentinels,

Bow strung and arrow set for sly marauder

Who dares to glance into the swimming dells.

So over shining pebbles of red jasper

Rounding with ebb and flow, the maidens run.

Disrobed, from mother's arms that fondly clasp her,

Flies Pshanshaw from Seetsebea, — Mid-day-sun.

Then in the eddying current boldly dashing,
Swims Pshanshaw gracefully from side to side,
One tossing arm amid the spray out-flashing,
One swinging low beneath the boiling tide.

And through the surging billows strong and daring,
Bounds the bright maiden like a fleet canoe ;
Fresh as the fawn so innocently staring,
Sweet as the balmy air and early dew.

III.

THE BREAKFAST.

Now from the terraced heights and shining beaches
Hastens each happy mother, happy maid,
Across the meadows' wide and blossomed reaches,
Toward the homes within the palisade.

Around the wigwam Pshanshaw steps so featly,
Bringing the marrow-fat and pemmican,
And tempting acid berries mixed discreetly,
Gathered with dainty care as home they ran.

Seetsebea stirs the succotash so steaming,
In earthen bowl the golden corn-meal piles,

The cup of crystal water sparkles gleaming,
Dipped from the pool where the Great Spirit smiles.

Then reverently the red-clay pipe she bringeth,
Filled with the willow-bark and spicy musk ;
The gift of peace where'er its soft smoke wingeth
The seeds of trust and friendship to the dusk.

Mahtotohpa soon enters in his glory,
Chief of the tribes, Pshanshaw's brave father too ;
A gallant warrior in his war-paint gory,
The terror of the hostile, fierce Sioux.

His shirt of mountain-goat skin, white and flossy,
Embroidered with the quills of porcupine,
Adorned with tufts of black hair, long and glossy,
With fringe of ermine tails and skins most fine ;

His leggings fringed with scalp-locks tossing quickly,
And worked with quills of every richest dye,
His moccasins of buckskin beaded thickly
In flaunting grace about his ankles lie ;

His glorious crest of white War-Eagle's pennons
Tossing aloft or down his sinewy back,
Streaming afar when dashing through the cañons,—
A deadly challenge on the red war-track !

While round his brawny chest the trophy-necklace
Of fifty huge claws of the grizzly bear,
Savage and sharp, a sign of contest reckless,
In token of his name he 'll proudly wear ;

His tall white bow as delicate as ivory,
Carved with the cunning of wise Medicine,

He carries haughtily, his forest livery,

Scaring the wild-wood game and venison ;

His quiver of the panther's skin ; his arrow

Feathered with hawk-plumes and the eagle's quill,

Its blade of chiselled flint, envenomed, narrow,

To pierce the death-wound with unerring skill ;

His tall and two-edged lance with shaft elastic,

Stained deep with blood drunk in by many a strife ;

His painted robe of fine white doeskin plastic,

His belt and tomahawk and scalping-knife ;—

So full arrayed, Mahtotohpa has entered ;

Seetsebea and Pshanshaw stand meekly still ;

In him obedient love and pride is centred,

His breakfast is prepared and waits his will.

IV.

MAIDENHOOD.

So through the seasons bloomed this Indian flower,
In modest promise, Nature's happy child ;
Untrammelled health and freedom was her dower,
And o'er her pathway every morning smiled.

She learned her maiden duties from her mother,—
Swung the calm pappoose in its hammock gay,
Beaded the moccasins for roving brother,
Watched the wild scalp-dance in the morning gray ;
Played with the prairie-dogs about their hutlets,
Welcomed the braves returning from the chase,

Prepared the buffalo-steak and venison cutlets,

Or peered into the warrior's painted face ;

Caressed the pretty little dappled ponies,

Braided the grass-mats and the willow-withe,

Paled at the war-whoop of the fierce Shoshones,

Watched the ball-players, graceful, strong, and lithe ;

Followed where late the wise old beaver lingers,

Or trapped the muskrat in the sedgy green,

Moulded the red clay in her dimpled fingers,

Shot her canoe across the Lacque du Cygne :

But when some savage mystery would haunt her,

When the weird Medicine his chant began,

Or torture with its stoic silence daunt her,

Her thirsty soul to clearer fountains ran ;

And sad, dim yearnings would her soul inspire

For something purer than her faith had known,

A holier shrine and truer altar-fire

Before her young imagination shone.

“O that I knew where I might find that Power,

Higher than height and deeper than the deep!”

So burns her heart while night's dark shadows lower,

So dreams she longing through her maiden sleep.

THE EVENING STAR.

BEAUTIFUL star that whisperest of the night,
Her holy prophet with the calm white light
Upon thy brow ! thou singest an evangel
Which tells of welcome rest, thou twilight angel ;
Peace which the good God sends in holy dark enfolded,
In raven wings the lily-calm is shrouded.

Beautiful star ! thine is no idle mission,
To say, " Lo, Night ! " then show us the pure vision,
To hush the ruddy west that we may win
A calm where God's fair angels enter in.
Move gently on in constant prophesying
Of peace, the foretaste of the heaven's undying.

We look up fresh to God and only there.
Night is all fraught with holiness and prayer.
We feel more close the love of God, warm-pressing ;
The quiet wraps our souls in its caressing,
Peace covers us with its white wings, and Even
Lifts us up full into the calm of heaven.

A TWILIGHT FANTASY.

A low, round cedar bush
Dark in the twilight hush,
With wreath of nodding daisies round it spread ;—
Like stars just flickering
The daisies wave and swing
Like vestal lamps above a crownèd head, —
Above one crowned and dead.

And through the silence deep,
And through that cedared sleep,
I hear the low waves washing to the shore ;

A dirge, a moan they seem, —
The voices of a dream,
Resounding deep and sad forevermore, —
A dirge from ocean's roar.

DECEMBER.

BLOW, northern winds !

To brace my fibres, knit my cords,

To gird my soul, to fire my words,

To do my work, — for 't is the Lord's, —

To fashion minds.

Come, tonic blasts !

Arouse my courage, stir my thought,

Give nerve and spring, that as I ought

I give my strength to what is wrought,

While duty lasts.

Glow, arctic light !

And let my heart, like burnished steel,

That bright, magnetic flame reveal

Which kindles purpose, faith, and zeal

For truth and right.

Shine, winter skies !

That when each brave day's work is done,

I wait in peace, from sun to sun,

To meet unshamed, through victory won,

Your starry eyes.

THE LESSON OF THE RAIN.

THE rain falls sadly on the icy panes, —
Bereaved the dull day wanes ;
The drops are past my counting, and the grief
Seems past relief.

Nay ! who knows what the losses or the gains
Of sadly dropping rains ?
Who counts the tears I shed, or numbers o'er
My blessings' store ?

I am too bold to call it sad or vain,
Nor all my grief restrain.

The cloud may wear an aureola bright

In upper light.

And the swift beat of the unceasing rain

May be the glad refrain

Of singing harvests ; yea, the blooming earth

May call it mirth.

Poor words are these : the angels will explain ;

True meanings shall remain

Till we read " joy " for " mourning " ; and for " sad "

Read " light " and " glad."

CHRISTMAS WEEK.

LIKE fair plateau lifted on snowy peak
Is spread the Christmas week ;
Its towering plain slopes down on either side
Into a valley wide ;
The valley of the season-varied years
From its high front appears
Verdured in summer or a harvest-plain
Teeming with golden grain.
This crowning height on the sierra's breast
Stretches its perfect rest,
Wherein the carol of heaven-greeting bird
By every heart is heard.

Glaciers may spread their winnowed whiteness round,

Or avalanche resound,

The torrent over awful chasms dash,

Or giant boulders crash ;

But still so near the calm, eternal skies

That peaceful plateau lies,

No sound of terror and no icy sea

Can mar its ecstasy.

There quietly the trusting pilgrim waits

Between its sacred gates,

While o'er the outspread valley of the year

God's love is shining clear.

THE CHRISTMAS SNOW.

I.

SEE what a pure, soft robe hath Nature spread
About the living and above the dead,
Wrapping us all within its ample folds !
And while I think of the dear dead it holds
So close to me alive, I hardly know
How not to greet them through the whispering snow,
But feel the Christmas greetings passing there,
Like snow-flakes floating in the peaceful air.

2.

We who, to-day, are thinking of our dead,
How deep the snows are lying o'er their head,

How dimly we may dream them near, or see
The meaning of their silent mystery,
Too faintly still we whisper through our grief:
“Lord, I believe ; help thou my unbelief !”
Too deaf our ears to their still yearning voice, —
“As thou hast loved me, so wilt thou rejoice !”

3.

Yes, we who keep the festival to-day
With sadness that we cannot drive away,
Let us be happy, too, and inly sing
Like birds from empty nests but on the wing
To fairer climes, who, as they sing and fly,
Feel warmer breezes ever drawing nigh,
See sunnier skies as swifter on they roam,
And know that just before is peace, and rest, and home.

WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

My daily round I tread

On heights serene,

And nightly lay my head

On angel-guarded bed,

By love o'er-canopied,

Felt, though unseen.

What matter how the task

Employ my hands?

God makes the work his mask,

So in his smile I bask,

And find that when I ask

The promise stands.

I entered in the shade
Shrinking, alone ;
“ Let this cup pass,” I prayed ;
When, lo ! Christ stood arrayed ;
I could not be afraid,
The darkness shone.

When in the fire of pain
I agonize,
If neither spot nor stain
Shall from its purge remain,
I ’ll covet it again
For sacrifice.

And when to watch and wait
Befits my soul,

Some sweeter word than "Fate"
Still keeps my heart elate;
Gladly I trust my state
To his control.

Poised and sustained I rest,
Whate'er betide.
By life's hard duties pressed,
My weakness all confessed,
Stayed on a Heavenly Guest,
And satisfied.

FORGET-ME-NOTS.

A WINNING, waving meadow, with scarf of blue and
green —

'T was the sedgy grass and water, with forget-me-nots
between —

We were wading over ankles, and the sun was shining
hot,

But we school-girls at West Newton loved the wild
forget-me-not.

Other meadows stretched alluring, where placid streams
flowed through,

And the gentian with its fringes, and the river flag
gleamed blue,

But the plashy, mocking mosses, with their clumps of
starry eyes,

The slender-stemmed forget-me-nots were more bewitch-
ing prize.

And when the July sun looks down on each successive
year,

And the happy green and blossoms, and the birds are
settled here,

I find within my memory a sunny summer spot,—

'Tis the old school at West Newton wreathed with
wild forget-me-not.

Retracing that bright picture, it is easy to begin

With the fog-cloud in the morning that shut the village in.

We were up in time to see it, ere it, lifting, thinned
away,

For we rose to read our lessons in the violet bloom of
day.

Anon the school was opening, and the instant found us
there —

Still how fresh the inspiration from the choral hymn
and prayer.

Sowing seed by other waters, it has strengthened us and
blest,

When our hands were almost failing, and our hearts
were sorely prest.

Soon blackboards teem with mystic curve and cabalistic
sign,

And a gentle lady stands there, with a mind so crys-
talline,

She guides the swift brain-coursers, and from her magic
hand

Runs thrilling to each eager steed the unseen electric
band.

And oft I have remembered, when my soul was dull
and spent,

How a queenly one looked up on us,—her color came
and went,

While her glowing words swept over us as healthful
winds sweep by,

And forever she enriched us with her dark and fervent
eye.

Enthusiasm — holy power ! best alchemist art thou,
Kindled from soul to soul, and sped from radiant brow
to brow,

Changing to joy all duty, and on transfiguring heights
Showing us all the shades of earth fair with celestial
lights.

Not least in this clear vision I remember, if I may,
Running cross the fields at twilight by a narrow, trodden
way, —

And she, at whose magnetic call, we every breadth could
span,
Shone like a rare crown-jewel in the home of Horace
Mann.

Education has its heroes ; they lay not their armor
down
Till they meet death in the combat, and receive the
victor's crown.

And the pioneer who, east and west, held firm th'
advancing van,
Was one of lordly heart and mien, — our own great
Horace Mann.

At last the happy seasons of that rich school year were
fled ;

They had lavished all their largess, and we gathered
round our head.

As a crescent of white lilies waits for some reviving
dew,

We, pale with parting, waited for his benediction true.

And when, with our commissions in his hand, he stood
and prayed,

We felt like the Apostles, strong in God, in self afraid ;

And an earnest, full assurance was given then and
there,

That God himself would answer that deep, availing
prayer.

So, young and full of courage, we looked the future
through,

And thought — There 's naught upon the earth we will
not dare to do.

All holy work is woman's work, unworthy she who scans
Each feebly set partition that divides her work from
man's.

Ah, wreaths of blue forget-me-not ! bloom new and
fresh alway,

Immortalize in us the faith and spirit of that day ;
And when, all met in Paradise, the long roll-call is
made,

Each with her work before the Lord, — we will not be
afraid.

POEM

READ TO THE GRADUATING CLASS AND ALUMNI OF STATE
NORMAL SCHOOL, JULY, 1874.

ACROSS the gentle slope of low-walled fields

Blows up the cool west-wind to fan my brow,

And all the beauty that the landscape yields

Is borne upon its wings to bless me now;

The belting grove, the blue o'erarching sky,

Teeming with life and joy or e'er the summer die.

The circling swallow intersects the air

With arc on arc, cleaving the passive blue,

Or, swooping round the meadow, cuts his share

The green, rock-islanded declension through,

Then straight into the sky he steers his way,
The music of his flight tuning the happy day.

And myriad drowsy noises soothe mine ear :

 The locust rasping still his busy wing,
The rustling corn or whirring loom more near,
 Or on the fir-tree spire a bird may sing, —
Glad pulse in Nature's seething, tidal voice, —
It knocks at my heart's door and bids my soul rejoice.

So rides full high the summer of my life !

 Its heavy hum of work, its fields of bloom,
Its odorous winds with hundred perfumes rife,
 Its many-voicèd joy, its tempest gloom ;
All various hues, commingling light and shade,
The changing cloud and shine harmoniously inlaid.

And while this noon of life hangs o'er my way,
In press of duties, 'neath meridian sun,
I pause to rest and would its ardor stay,—
Look back to where — its labor scarce begun —
The spring-time fair in hazy beauty rose,
Recall its singing birds, its visions bright disclose.

Like you I stood upon the threshold stone
In earnest posture ; forward, eager gaze
I cast where through the golden vista shone
Alluring beauty, light of hope, whose rays
Flush wide the path of life to youthful eyes,
Its fields unfading green, unclouded blue its skies !

Others may speak of girlhood's careless joy,
Its wayward moods, coquettish wiles and pranks,

Its shallow fascinations for the toy

Of soberer manhood's pastime ; little thanks

They win who seek to deepen its intent,

Enlarge its scope and aim, say true what girlhood meant.

I know with you that in its playful mood

There hides the longing to be true and pure ;

A wish for consecration, womanhood

Seems beautiful, good angels reassure

The tender self-distrust, and by the door

Of opening life they promise courage evermore.

I know how fresh the air seems all about ;

Elastic, bounding pulse and buoyant heart

And radiant eye all spectres put to rout,

And laughing lips defy care's sober art ;

The cup of life is sparkling to the brim,
Hope swells its foaming crest, jewels its silver rim.

And when like you to-day I stood between,

Hands either way outstretched, to wave good-by
To youth's bright revels, and then forward lean

To take the task God called me then to try,
I heard his voice within my deepest soul,
And glad I gave to him my work, my way, — the whole !

For all is his, — not part ; your life's sweet spring,

Through which his love has breathed in whisperings oft,
The while his grace perfumed its blossoming

And floated o'er it in a halo soft ; —
How can you but breathe back the incense sweet,
And all the joy of youth in song of praise repeat ?

Before you wait the truths you long to learn,

Such glorious lessons in God's book to read!—

Or where the shining stars forever burn,

Or where enticing Nature fain would lead,

The secret treasures of her hoard to find,

And quench the heaven-born thirst of the insatiate mind.

Why in the heart of girlhood should there wait

The keen desire to hear God's word of love

Not only in responsive hearts, elate

With dreams of bliss, but in his works, above,

Below, around, where'er he speaks in tone

Of concord, — law and germ and growth, — all, all his
own?

And while in beauteous order he evolves

All phases fair, suggestions, germs, and roots

Of being, or all form resolves

Into its deathless elements, the fruits

Of circling power creative, — he feels still

Your single, conscious life, and bids you do his will.

He gives you these, his temples, you believe, —

Fresh, healthful forms of beauty, soul-lit eyes,

All avenues of knowledge to receive

Hints of himself, to grow pure, good, and wise,

To make your life his home, — keep integral

This rhythmic, triune being, — body, mind, and soul.

Now, as you stand just waiting on the verge

Of holy womanhood, what fair ideal

Shall from the future's shadow-land emerge,

Inspiring vision you must make all real?

With girlhood's prophet-eyes you see more clear
Than ever spirit came to wizard or to seer.

Perhaps the enraptured song of Dante stirs

Your quick imagination, and you see

His calm-browed, gold-haired Beatrice, — hers

Such winning, gracious charms, the mystery
Of Love divine enshrined in mortal guise,
All loveliness looks out from her celestial eyes !

Or, if too lofty Beatrice stand

In garment spotless on her radiant throne,
You turn to one who offers you her hand

In easier wisdom, but with grace her own,
The classic Portia of transparent mind
Gemming her clear, keen wit with mercy for her kind !

But there are names more honored and more dear,
More vitally our own in history ;
Yearn we to follow in the noble sphere
Of science, comprehending mystery,
Interpreting the laws of vale and hill,
Reading heaven's numbers right? lo ! Mary Somerville.

Or should you hear God calling you by sign
Of sympathy with lowly hearts in pain,
To bear the cross with them and to resign
All meed of social praise, all hope of gain,
To walk the earth with cup of Holy Grail, —
Tread in the sainted steps of Florence Nightingale.

Yet chiefly, O, be true to self and God !
As you are gifted and as you are led,

Unfold his gifts, follow his guiding word ;

So feed you others, so shall you be fed.

The rosebud blooms a rose ; the lily's cup

No other than its own pure fragrance offereth up.

.

And we, my sisters, who have come to speak

One word of cheer and greeting to each other,

However brief that word, however weak,

'Tis sweet to hear and tell our fostering mother,

Who calls us with a voice of welcome now

To hang our votive laurel on her honored brow.

She lit within our hearts a deathless flame,—

To love and seek the truth by every path ;

And now we come with pæans to her name,

Perchance with harvest or with aftermath,

To say how bright and how undimmed the ray
Which beckons us still on to truth's millennial day.

What stars have risen o'er our horizon-line !

What clear, full planet-truths above us swung !
Revealing Science swept the heavens divine

And read their story with her silver tongue ;
From dark to light their secret they unroll,
God's bow is set in the cloud, a fair and open scroll !

.

See we so near across the sunny seas

With gentle outline of white shining shore,
Sad, consecrated isle of Penekese,

Waiting the teacher who will come no more ?
The lapsing wave sings low its soft refrain, —
“ He who our secrets read, — he ne'er will come again ! ”

His life to Nature's inmost life so nigh,
His all-absorbed, receptive, childlike heart,
The ecstasy of rapture-kindled eye,
Magnetic inspiration to impart,
His reverent love, his calm, unuttered prayer,
Each form and type of life his golden altar-stair !

O, noble pattern of the teacher, he !

From depth of soul and fervent zeal he taught.
To hidden things a mirror he could be,
To show what wondrous works the Master wrought.
His eye of love saw nothing small or mean
Where the least finger-print or thought of God had been.

So stand the teacher high amid his time !

Directing thought, uplifting all the race,

Tracing the thread of histories sublime,
Interpreting the signs of Nature's face ;
From arts of school and rules of method free,
By native force of soul true educator he !

His very presence breeds a noble trust ;
Within his sphere great-hearted love is born ;
All broods of narrow strife, self-seeking lust,
Disperse like mists before a sunny morn.
The glory of a shrine his looks express,
Life, light, and utterance his priesthood high confess !

*PERSEPHONE; OR, THE SPIRIT OF NATURE
AND LIFE.*

PART I.

NATURE in sweet bewilderment

From out her snowy vesture creeps :

The gentle Spring forgetful sleeps,

Lulled in her dream of deep content ;

Dream that in rosy hopes will break,

When dancing o'er the daisied lea,

Shall step the bride Persephone,

And all the earth to life awake.

Shy Nature kneels in trembling guise,
Her pure brow white as driven snow,
Her fleecy robes the south winds blow,
Love's mystery lights her dewy eyes.

She hears the ripple on the shore,
The tuneful bluebird cleave the skies;
Her heart leaps up in glad surprise
To know her hour has come once more.

Swift-footed bride, Persephone,
How blush the meadows at thy tread!
The oak unfurls his banners red,
And swallows come across the sea.

The downy willow from her shroud
Hangs out her tassels' yellow bloom,
The nestling fern unrolls its plume,
The modest woods are veiled in cloud.

How gleams the golden oriole
Out-glancing from her swinging nest,
Her chirping brood beneath her breast,
While songs of joy to Nature roll !

Ring every golden buttercup, —
A bell of bridal festival ;
Weave white the daisy coronal,
And gather all the sweetness up.

The chrysalid with rapture stirs ;
The water-beetle feels more nigh

His glory of the dragon-fly,
And nectar fills the flower-spurs.

Down in the confidential green
Of clover-fields the insects hum,
While myriad creatures pipe and drum,
And live their busy life unseen.

The flowers of the Indian corn
Droop their fair feathers o'er the sheath,
And all their pollen grains bequeath
That golden harvests may be born.

Ye chiding bees, I will not heed
Your busy murmur ; summer's sky

Enchants me, though I know not why.
On her ambrosia let me feed,

And wander with Persephone,
As walking in a happy sleep,
Enraptured with the chorus deep
Of Nature's ceaseless symphony.

The night-moth dips his honeyed tongue
In whispering blossoms of the dusk,
And cereus wafts her subtle musk
While nightshade bells are passion-rung ;

And meteors down the milky way
Hurl their swift lances, till the night
Is quivering in the silver light,
The mystic dawning of the day.

In ravishment so full and true
I fain would linger ; nay, but hark !
The carol of the meadow-lark
Is palpitating through the blue.

The sweet azalea scents the breeze,
The bayberry's warm and spicy breath,
Its fragrant incense offereth
On noon's high altar 'neath the trees.

The laurel's rosy-plaited cup
Clusters above its glossy leaves,
Where Poesy her garland weaves,
And Hebe holds the chalice up.

Hush ! break no more the golden calm ;
Persephone in bliss shall dream,

The Naiads sleep upon the stream,
While drowsy airs are thick with balm.

The summer-tide swells high and full;
I sit within the waving grass;
The scented breezes o'er me pass,
The thistles shed their silky wool.

The ox-eyed daisies hail the sun,
And sprinkle all the acres bright
With golden stars of radiant light
Amid the feathery grasses dun.

The plaintive brook reflects the glow
Of rows of bleeding cardinal;

The whippoorwill's sweet madrigal
Breathes through the sunset soft and low.

I see the dear Persephone
Trailing her purple robes more slow,
Her lovely eyelids drooping low,
And gazing pensive o'er the sea.

The fringed gentians kiss her hand,
The milkweed waves its soft adieus ;
Their tender words she must refuse,
For dark steeds wait upon the strand.

Erewhile the sap has had its will,
The bud has opened into leaf,

The grain is ripening for the sheaf,
Demeter's arms have had their fill.

The seed has dropped into the mould,
The flower all its petals shed,
The rattling stalks are dry and dead,
Persephone is still and cold.

Fair Nature's dream is all fulfilled,
Her clinging robes she folds once more,
And glides within her close-locked door,
For all the wine of life is spilled.

Come now, ye reapers, to the field,
Tread in the wine-press' purple stain,
And bind with joy the golden grain,
The record of the year is sealed;

The harvest garnered ; yea, the chaff
Blown wide upon the vagrant wind.
The cup is drained, and naught behind
Is ours again to spurn or quaff.

Adieu, divine Persephone !
We wait another summer's joy,
When the pomegranate's juice shall cloy,
And Hades ope its gate for thee.

PART II.

Bewildering miracle of life !
The brooding nest, the swelling bud,
The rushing river at its flood,
And Spring with all its promise rife.

Now Nature calls from star to clod
All things to fruitful blossoming ;
The resurrection-soul of Spring
Speaks out the vernal thought of God.

For birth is holy as a shrine,
And sacred is the hidden germ ;
The seed is sown when faith is firm,
And Nature's vestal hour divine.

The snowy lily lifts her face
Upon the placid, waveless lake ;
Her pure white petals, flake on flake,
Are peerless in their queenly grace.

The rose in all his pride superb,
Blush-tinted or in royal red,

Still holds aloft his crownèd head,
In empire none would dare disturb.

But rose and lily I forego
To watch the grass-blade's juicy shoot,
The impulse of the swelling fruit,
The spring of life I fain would know ;

How bud the microscopic cells,
What subtle forces polarize
To build the walls of plants and skies.
And where essential power dwells.

The cool of evening o'er the land
Blew onward with its soothing rest,

And through its peace a presence pressed,
Methought a child might understand.

The gorgeous blossoms of the noon,
The lavish wealth of leaf and flower,
Were hid in that revealing hour,
Which brought the spirit's precious boon.

The seed, the bloom, the germ, the cell,
The protoplasm's mystery,
Evolve their various history,
And one creative presence tell ;

That Presence in the garden's shade
Then talked with me as friend with friend ;

Sweet converse that shall never end,
And love that maketh not afraid.

The simmering seasons leave me this :
Desire to know and understand
The thought that bids all life expand,
And blossom in eternal bliss.

If haply I that hand may clasp
Which touches with electric thrill
Material force or spirit-will, —
All things within its loving grasp, —

And work its purpose evermore
Through endless summers of delight,

Growing and blooming in his sight,
And learning his celestial lore.

Love-hungering and thirsting soul !

Persephone shall give to thee
Her beauty for eternity,
And wing thee for immortal goal.

She decks the glorious walks of heaven
With rose-suns lighting all its noons,
With planet-lilies, argent moons,
Blooming in more than colors seven.

While all about that garden fair
The starry buds and blossoms shine

With grace and fragrance so divine
As nourished in celestial air.

Thereon the soul, with vision new,
Gazes and wonders more and more :
Bright sea of light without a shore,
The spotless robe of heavenly blue.

From birth to death, from death to birth :
So sing the swift recurring years.
The chant rolls on in other spheres,
“ Behold, I make new heavens and earth ! ”

New senses, new rewards of sense,
The spectrum filled, all dark lines bright.

Released from this close-fettered sight,
We see life's fuller evidence.

And music unimagined here
Shall break in wave on wave of sound,
No grand chords silent, and no bound
To limit the enfranchised ear.

Fresh miracle and fresh desire,
And nature's still enlarging scope,
A deeper faith, a broader hope,
A steadier purpose to aspire ;

New inspiration rounding life,
And speeding it upon its way

To those great cycles, where the day
Is without shadow, without strife.

Whene'er I dream of poet-seer,
And stand with him on highest height,
We hail no planet's splendid light,
Nor gaze on star without a peer ;

But on to farthest nebulae
We point the searching telescope ;
Imagination winged with hope
May revel in that mystery.

Then thought may pass the bounds of space,
And wonder swell to worship meet,

Till in a trance sublime and sweet,
We sing from out our heavenly place,

The hymn of forming elements,
Of lighted suns in orbits grand,
Resolving chaos and the strand
That separates the firmaments ;

Of forces striking through the void,
The anthem of God's " Let there be !"
When mists shall sink to surging sea,
And star-dust pulsate to spheroid.

So through all things the breath of life
Is breathed from God, the increate,

The one essential germ of fate,
To push its way through bounds and strife ;

To hold its course by converse strain,
To keep unswerved its orbit grand,
Still circling on as he had planned,
Resolvent of life's joy and pain.

Perhaps, God grant ! the dreaded sin,
Like backward stroke of wing or oar,
Shall urge us on till, more and more,
We see the good that we must win,

And faster sail the billowy sea,
Or swifter wing the buoyant air,
For wind or wave that crossed us there,
Than any tide that swung us free ;

Till, looking back through vista far,
We see our course as 't was to be :
True in the vast eternity
As radiant track of circling star.

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